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THE SLEEPING WORLD

AND OTHER POEMS

THE
SLEEPING WORLD
AND OTHER POEMS

BY
LILLIEN BLANCHE FEARING

33



CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY
1887

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To my Mother.

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THE SLEEPING WORLD.

HOW sweet it is to think, as poets tell,
That when their universal night has draped
The earth with gloom, in snowy uniform
And shining armor clad, with sleepless eyes
A heavenly vanguard camps beside the world !
I love to keep this fancy in my brain,
And wonder, when the hovering night drops down
Noiseless as down the sky Apollo's herd
Came driven by a roguish infant god, —
Noiseless as drops a bird of sable plumes
At rosy eve upon its downy nest, —
If some bright spirit might not sometime come
Who ne'er before had watched the slumbering
world.
I love to think of him with flaky feet
Threading the mighty labyrinth of stars,
Amid the choral harmony of spheres,

Looking ethereal darkness through and through
For Earth's pale light to glimmer on his path,
Till he beholds her like a ship afloat
In the blue sea of air that wraps her round ;
Her peaceful young moon, like a white sail spread,
Letting its liquid pearls of light drop down
The frosty rigging to the blossoming deck ;
Her icy ribs agleam ; blue waves of air
Washing her emerald prow. " How beautiful !
Was aught in heaven more fair ? Then why should
man

Come weary to the everlasting gates ? "

I think of him as piercing the soft air
Where clouds like sea-birds lightly skim the blue ;
I see him resting on a fleecy bank,
Bowed tenderly above the sleeping world.

The Earth is sleeping, deeply, peacefully ;
A silver sheet of moonlight fringed with stars
Enwraps her form, and long dark shadows lie
Like flowing tresses on her cheek and breast.
" How fair ! " the angel whispers as he bends.
" Oh, happy man ! why should God pity him,
Or angels weep for him ? What, sin and grief !

What, shame and tears ! What are these mournful things ?

I see no sin and grief, no shame and tears .”

The Earth is sleeping, deeply, peacefully.

The cloud stoops lower ; nearer the angel bends.

He sees a sleeping babe, as beautiful

As are the bright-winged cherubs of the skies.

Its rose-leaf hands its dimpled bosom press ;

Its golden lashes sweep its snowy cheeks ;

Its silken ringlets from its pure brow smoothed ;

A smile upon the dewy lips enthroned,

As if the light of heaven still lingered there.

“ Peace, happy infant, take thy rest in love ! ”

The angel whispers tenderly, and smiles.

A form beside the rosy infant kneels,

With heaving bosom and with quivering lips.

Her feet have stumbled, and her limbs have failed ;

Her breast grown chill, her arms refused their load.

The night is damp ; no shelter for her babe,—

It matters not for her. She strives to pray,

But only weeps instead. Weep on, poor heart !

Weep on ! God often takes our tears for prayers.

“ These bright drops, running swiftly, must be tears ! ”

The watching angel whispers sorrowfully.

The Earth is sleeping, deeply, peacefully.
Here lies a youth in calm and sweet repose,
His dark locks from his noble forehead tossed,
His lips half parted by a radiant smile
Born of some high ambitious dream within.
“Peace, peace, O youth!” the angel says, and
smiles.

In yonder shadow is a dark form crouched
Beside a pallid corpse,— life touching death.
His hands are reeking in the warm red blood
That slowly drips upon the cold numb earth,
And like a crimson serpent glides away.
No fear of God is in the hungry eyes ;
His eager fingers clutch a bag of gold.
Grasp on, poor wretch ! for death shall one day
hold

Thy withered heart with a far stronger grip.
“This dark presageful thing I see is Sin !”
The watching angel whispers sorrowfully.

The Earth is sleeping, deeply, peacefully.
Here is a nuptial feast,— a bride begemmed
As a June blossom is bedewed at morn,
Husband’s and lover’s kiss upon her lips.
“Peace, happy bride !” the angel says, and smiles.

Yonder a pale form by a rushing stream
Hides from the light of day and human eyes.
It bends one shuddering moment o'er the tide ;
And then, without a cry of penitence,
Unless that gurgling moan could be a prayer,
It leaps into the dark devouring waves.
Speed on, poor soul, speed on to meet thy God !
He will consider thy temptation here,
And will be merciful. “ This must be Shame ! ”
The watching angel whispers sorrowfully.

The Earth is sleeping, deeply, peacefully.
Two forms are resting on the selfsame couch ;
One's quiet breathing tells of tranquil sleep.
“ Peace, slumberer ! ” the angel says, and smiles.
The other restless on his pillow turns,
His frame rocked by a whirlwind of the soul ;
The sob that beats his breast like prisoned bird,
And must escape somehow or burst its bars,
Crosses his lips half smothered in its flight,
Lest it arouse the sleeper at his side.
It may have been a low green grave far off
In some rose-kirtled glade, it may have been
A grave within the heart, that caused the storm.

Peace, troubled heart ! oh, do not be afraid !
Believe in God ; trust also in his Son !
“ Grief, grief ! ” the angel whispers sorrowfully.

The more he views, the more of sin and grief,
Of shame and tears, stand out like cruel scars
Upon the bosom of the lovely Earth ;
And every smile seems balanced by a tear,
And every good seems weighed against some ill.
He veils his bright face with his wings, and weeps.

The Earth is sleeping, deeply, peacefully.
Its innocence and joy, its purity
And love, may sleep ; but ah ! its sin and grief,—
But ah ! its shame and tears,—unseen, perhaps,
But still wide-eyed and restless, will be warmed
And nourished 'neath the raven wing of Night.
Peace, Earth ! thou art not drifting helplessly
Through mists of Time ; God's hand is at thy helm ;
He knows thy chart, and keeps thy reckoning.
Sleep on, sleep on, all deeply, peacefully !

HUMAN LOVE'S WEAKNESS.

AGAINST the forehead of the world
A new sun hurls his trenchant beams ;
The stars have gathered up their light,
And wrapped it in a fold of night ;
The swan-white wings of Sleep are furled
Above her mystic nest of dreams.

It seems all eve, or else all dawn ;
All light seems strangled in the sun ;
The meaning has gone out of words,
The music from the songs of birds ;
The rare blue from the sky has gone,
Like bloom from flowers by frosts undone.

All bloom, all melody, all glow
Have perished with the angel grace

That wreathed the brow of my loved one ;
As dews drunk by the thirsty sun
Are sucked in vortices of woe
Whose vapors over-mist God's face.

Grief like an aspic on me hung,
And sucked my heart-blood. Still I rise,
And journey on my gloomful way,
Though never moon strikes through the gray
Of triple-folded vapors flung
Across the glory of her eyes.

Oh ! human love doth underrun
And overrun all human things ;
When it is crushed, life reels and swounds,
And gaspeth from a hundred wounds ;
Earth staggers ; darkness blinds the sun
As with a multitude of wings.

Love spins her magical cocoon
About our souls, — and that 's our world.
We think the earth rocks when we shake ;
We think the stars clash when we break,
On some still, stormless night in June,
From love's frail leaf about us curled.

God, whet our senses till they reach
Outside of Time for light and sound ;
Till down the clavier deep and broad
Of firmaments swells “ God, God, God ! ”
And our souls, circling heavenward, teach
Their loves to soar above the ground :

And though loved tones sink into hush,
Dead hopes like star-dust strew the sod ;
Though distant suns meet and embrace,
A system totter from its place, —
We hear God’s heart pant through the rush
Of elements, and cry, “ God, God ! ”

A THOUGHT;

IT fell at night upon a rocking world
As sinks through glooms of eve a falling star ;
God launched it upon Time with wings unfurled,
And marked its flight through centuries afar.

As fell that spirit bright on Lemnos isle ;
As Phaeton fell from Phœbus' blazing car ;
As from an angel's lip a holy smile
Slides like a sunbeam from a world afar, —

So on the dim earth fell that shining thought :
Like shooting-star it flashed along the brain
Of one who flushed to feel the strength it brought,
And shaped it for a world's eternal gain.

On prophet brows the chrismal light falls still ;
They break for us through calyxes of doubt,
Through leaf-like thought o'er-folding thought, until
The single golden heart of Truth shines out.

They catch a burning thought from lips divine,
And mould it into shape for human ken ;
In picture, song, or sculptured stone to shine,
A holy thing blest unto sentient men.

THE HEART KNOWETH ITS OWN
BITTERNESS.

WHO knoweth what cold drops of pain
One hour into my life may rain,—

What poison-cup my lips may press?

Who knoweth of the broken trust?

None other felt the silent thrust;

The heart knows its own bitterness:

The steady drip, drip, on the brain
Of one long agony of pain

That slowly wears the life away;

Like water dropping on a stone,

Through the long ages grinding on,

Till stubborn rock weds unto clay:

The love that all unfaithful proved;

Shame for the shame of one beloved;

Dead hopes that drop from barren days,

Like fruit born in ungracious Springs,
And falling ere the season brings
 Its rounded cheek the flush of praise.

The heart knows how the hot tears fall,—
How many are not shed at all,
 But, burning, ever backward press,
Blister the soul's white cheeks, and make
A twofold anguish for the sake
 Of hiding the heart's bitterness.

I see thee oft, pure silver ball,
Roll noiseless through the shadowy hall
 Of Night's wide temple, and I cry :
“ I feel a nearer kin with thee,
Though dumbly thou beholdest me,
 O moon, than with my kind ! ” And I

Think, when the mute stars flash abroad,
They stand before the face of God,
 And He smiles through each astral gem ;
Each comes to have a life apart,
A separate, beating, feeling heart,
 And mine beats out to God through them.

I deem it strange men sometimes feel
With lifeless things and things unreal
 A closer kin than with their kind ;
Into my soul a star can burn
Its soulless being, till I yearn
 To it as to a kindred mind.

Each heart has its full-measured woe
No other heart can fully know ;
 And yet methinks it would be less
If more true souls would but declare :
“ I grieve for you ; oh, let me share
 A part of your heart’s bitterness ! ”

I met a friend amid life’s hum :
Our lips spake, but our hearts were dumb ;
 A sea of silence ’tween them rolled ;
Our palms touched, but our souls stood far
As space dividing star from star,
 Whose roads have never yet been told.

Hollow as wind through bleaching bones,
Cold words slipped through unmeaning tones :
 He wished that Heaven would prosper me ;

I gave back dead words for his dead :
He never meant the thing he said ;
It had no pulse of sympathy.

Our lives possess so much of form,
So little heart to keep it warm !

We say a thing because that men
By saying oft have made it seem
Good so to speak ; we do not dream
A lie 's a lie, no matter when.

He thought of some new form of self
That would enrich his dearer self ;

He thought not of a heart's distress,
Or, thinking, he to speak forbore,
Because of that calm smile I wore,
Concealing my heart's bitterness.

I say " My friend," and speak a lie ;
He knows me not, nor yet know I
One feature of his spirit face.

I clasp his hand ; I say, " My friend ;"
I wish him well,— and there 's an end :
The words possess no sort of grace.

I say, " My friend," and blush for shame
That I should brand the sacred name
 (A dead flower set to a green stem) ;
I call an empty shell a pearl ;
I hold it up above life's whirl,
 And say, " Behold, a precious gem ! "

Oh, hollow friendship ! What's a friend ?
One whom I greet, with whom I spend
 An idle hour when days are drear ?
Who speculates on human game,
Who battens on his neighbor's name,
 And plagues me with the fickle year ?

My friend shall be by slow time proved,
Shall hold me as himself beloved,
 Shall let me share his heart's distress ;
My friend shall own that he is dust,
My friend, — the heart with whom I trust
 A part of my heart's bitterness.

O brother men ! why stand apart,
With never touch of heart to heart,
 Disclaiming your great brotherhood ;

Hiding the angel that ye boast,
Keeping the human uppermost,
As if ye were ashamed of good?

Oh, tell me of the peace ye 've known
Within the shadow of God's throne !

How in your grief was borne to ye
The far faint breath of seraph wings !
Why so much talk of common things,
When souls are sick for sympathy?

The stars, revolving in their spheres,
Touch one another through the years
By laws which act through subtle airs ;
Perhaps our souls, through circling days,
By natural laws of human ways,
Touch one another unawares.

So, like dead matter forward whirled
Through heats that generate a world,
We grow to our dead selves, and press
All heats of sorrow to the core ;
Fire at the heart, but outward frore,
Concealing the heart's bitterness.

Oh, give me of the heart's sweet wine
Unmixed with passion, all divine,
 Pressed from the holy grapes of Love !
Give me a love so deep and broad,
It reaches to the throne of God,
 And hints a life I know not of !

Oh, let us have more human faith,
More sympathy of brain and breath !

We talk of faith that 's deep and broad
In God the Father ; we shall find
A broader faith in human kind
 Will give us stronger faith in God.

Hearts have so much to bear at best ;
A little sympathy expressed
 In words with heart-dew all aglow
Would make less keen the inward moan
For griefs which must be borne alone,
 Whose fulness but one heart can know.

More soul-exchange amid life's din,
More mingling of the lives within,
 And Time, with all its deep distress,

Shall still a tuneful proem be
To God's sublime Eternity,
 Where hearts forget their bitterness.

O grand, mysterious Beyond,
Where hearts to kindred hearts respond !
 Leap forward, Soul, till it is won ;
And there forget that breath is pain,
Forget the strife of heart and brain ;
 Unveil the statue to the sun !

O Life ! O secular sweet years
Beyond this sea of human tears
 Where all the glebe of Time is lost,
When from the limbec of earth's bain
We come more Christ-like for our pain,
 And count that pain but little cost !

For we are angels bound in chains
Of bone and muscle, blood and brains ;
 'T is when we bind the angel down,
Making it servant to the flesh,
Tangling its bright wings in the mesh
 Of sin, that we displace our crown.

O Love, pure, deep, and lily-strown,
About the broad base of God's throne
Thy stainless waters ever press !
Soon, looking earthward from thy marge,
I shall behold with vision large
How each heart bears its bitterness.

PRAISE.

WHY doth a little human praise
Flush all the forehead sunsetwise,
Strike the heart's fire till it betrays
Itself by leaping to the eyes,
And shining through them till they grow
Star-lustrous with the inward glow?

Why should a little world-praise peal
So rapturously across the brain,
When to and fro men's judgments reel
With pendulous throbs 'twixt wise and vain?
Why ask we not if angels raise
A silver shout of blame or praise?

Earth makes such tumult in our ears, —
Scorn clashed with praise, — it often serves
To drown God's whisper through the spheres,
Along the soul's ethereal nerves
Borne softly. Soul, couldst thou but know
The rapture thou art missing so!

If I once wrought some Christly deed,
Lifted some soul from deathful things
Into God's smile, supplied the need
Of some sick heart, or touched its strings
Left tuneless by the jar of pain,
And made them sweet and true again ;

Then if God's finger gently slid
The bolts of sense, and locked my soul
From world approval, and amid
The inner silence, roll on roll
Rushed angel harmonies complete,—
His praise in modulations sweet :

Oh, whatsoever height of heights
My feet might rise to, evermore
Above the flickering shifting lights
Of human smiles, above the frore
Of human scorn, my soul would gaze
Throneward for God's dear blame or praise.

Though stars of human power should rise,
Should blaze, should burst, should sink unseen ;
Though storms of Change across the skies
Should sweep their fiery skirts, — serene

My soul could stand, and strong and clear,
Like God's own bugle-blast, could hear

Above the deep discordant clash
 Of mortals judging mortal things,
Above the wondrous silver crash
 Of angel gitterns swept by wings,
One grand note of approval run
Through all, above all, — God's “Well done !”

WHAT HAVE I DONE?

I LAY my finger on Time's wrist to score
The forward-surging moments as they roll ;
Each pulse seems quicker than the one before,
And lo ! my days pile up against my soul
As clouds pile up against the golden sun :
Alas ! what have I done ? what have I done ?

I never steep the rosy hours in sleep, *

Or hide my soul as in a gloomy crypt ;
No idle hands into my bosom creep ;
And yet, as water-drops from house-eaves drip,
So, viewless, melt my days, and from me run :
Alas ! what have I done ? what have I done ?

I have not missed the fragrance of the flowers,
Or scorned the music of the flowing rills
Whose numerous liquid tongues sing to the hours ;
Yet rise my days behind me like the hills,
Unstarred by light of mighty triumphs won :
Alas ! what have I done ? what have I done ?

Be still, my soul ; restrain thy lips from woe ;
Cease thy lament ! for life is but the flower ;
The fruit comes after death : how canst thou know
The roundness of its form, its grace and power ?
Death is Life's morning ; when thy work 's begun,
Then ask thyself, What yet is to be done ?

JESUS WEPT.

THRICE wondrous thing which has of God been told,

To reach the deeps unmeasured of the soul,
And touching all its sorrows manifold,
Through imperfection bid perfection roll ;
Blest thought, which turns to wine tears that have crept

Between the weary eyelids, — Jesus wept.

To forge a sun, to rivet myriad stars,
Through serried veins to pour earth's flashing rills,
To kennel hungry seas in granite bars,
To whet the lightnings on the rock-browed hills, —
Majestic wonders ! But sweet to be kept,
And crowning wonder of them all, — God wept.

Oh, glorious, gracious thought ! that God should feel
The edge of human pain. Oh, sweet belief !
That through His holy eyelids there should steal
Those warm soul-droppings,—signs of human
grief ;
That through His being Earth's cold anguish swept
Like sweep of salt sea-surges,—and He wept !

Lo ! our humanity has touched God's crown
As some frail leaf might touch the bending spheres ;
And from the heights of Godship He stooped down
To bathe His forehead in the brine of tears.
He lived and talked with men ; He toiled and slept :
But struck our human key-note when He wept.

Weep, anguished soul ! God wept long years ago ;
So sanctified thy tears forevermore.
He hears the madrigals of human woe
Swell ever upward from Time's echoing shore,
Like dirge of wild waves on a wild land swept,
As once upon the earth He heard — and wept.

Weep, burdened soul ! Let fall thy tears like rain ;
God counts the drops in which thy slow years
steep ;
He gathers them like mountain dew again,
Transformed to pearls which seraphim shall keep
For thy soul's crowning, when, by grief unswept,
It leans upon the breast of Him that wept.

TO A STAR.

THOU beauteous star that lifts thy silver head
Above the dusky shoulders of the world,
And trembles like a drop of glory pearled
Upon the flower of darkness, wide outspread !

How many ages in thy circles whirled
Hast thou been reaching with thy beams of light,
Through sweep on sweep of starry spaces bright,
And feeling for this weary, shuddering world ?

What noble Titans dwell in thy rare clime ?
Surely thou dost embower some God-like race ;
Oh ! what am I that doth behold thy face ? —
A speck of dust upon the web of Time !

Unheeding Time, thou threadest the woof of spheres,
All glowing from the finger-touch of God ;
While I must cleave unto this heap of sod,
A worm, with neither might nor length of years.

But hold ! Knowest thou the wondrous thing thou art ?

Dost thou not run through the harmonious theme
Of rhythmic spheres that round thy pathway teem,
Unconscious of thine own majestic part ?

Now serried thoughts into my bosom cram,
And music — I call words — runs from my tongue ;
Lo ! I am like the God from whom I sprung ;
I bow before the wondrous thing I am.

I know the fount in which my life begun, —
But thou knowest not the source of all thy light ;
Thou sweepest on, ignipotent and bright ;
Still through thy glorious circles blindly run.

When this wrapped soul has cast its fetters far,
And, naked, leaped to heaven's highest noon,
As bursts a bright-winged moth from its cocoon,
Lo ! then shall I transcend the brightest star.

CLAUDE AND ELOISE.

OFTEN I forget my story, as I turn the great
world o'er,
Like a book of many pages full of strange and mys-
tic lore.

I forget my own pulse leaping swift the shuddering
vein along,
And my own heart wildly beating time to Life's
pathetic song.

I forget vain hopes and longings, all the thrilling
minor parts
Of my own life, as I ponder o'er the tales of other
hearts.

So, to-night, all self-forgetting, low above the page
I bend,
And I read the tender story of thy early youth, my
friend.

Every word is like a heart-beat as it echoes in my ears,
And I list the thrilling measures swelling through the resonant years.

As a picture rare, projected on a dim and shaded screen,
I behold thy bright youth gleaming 'gainst life's shadowy unseen ;

I remember well the playground, its smooth walks and bending trees,
Children swarming hither, thither, like the summer's busy bees.

Then we thought the world a playground, where men play at hide-and-seek,
Where the race is for the stronger, and the strong protect the weak.

Now it seems a field of battle, where great ends are lost and won,
Where the weak must fight the stronger, and the strife is never done.

Eyes like azure wells of gladness ; hair like sun-light
braided up ;

Mouth forever sweet and tender, like a rose's dewy
cup ;

Voice that broke in waves of music on the undulating
breeze,

Heart as pure as new-blown lily, had the gentle
Eloise.

Claude, dark-eyed, dark-browed, and silent, was to
her in contrast drawn

As a shadow to a sunbeam, and as twilight unto
dawn.

They were shy of one another, used no pretty arts
to please ;

'Twas a year and three months over, ere Claude
spoke to Eloise.

Often through her trembling lashes she would give
him one shy look,

And he sometimes gazed upon her when her eyes
were on her book.

There they learned the selfsame lessons, frowned
the selfsame sums above,
As in after years they puzzled o'er the vexing prob-
lem,— Love.

Sometimes they would meet in passing on the path-
way to and fro,
When the tall trees reached their green hands to the
blue sky bending low ;

When the primrose blushed and nodded, leaning
from the green hedgerow,
And the meek white daisies glistened in the grass
like flakes of snow.

Vines their scarlet berries sprinkled like warm blood-
drops through the trees ;
“Where,” thought Claude, “is fruit or flower half
so fair as Eloise?”

Oh, the merry, merry frolics of their rainless, shade-
less youth,
When the Spring beat in their pulses, and the earth
breathed love and truth !

Oh, the heart's sweet Indian summer, when love
spreads her tender haze !

Oh, the dreamy, misty splendor of those mellow,
cloudless days !

Youthful passions often languish ; all hearts have
their callow loves

Which they brood in life's sweet springtime like
the tender brooding doves.

They will take wing like the young birds ere the
summer's bloom decay ;

Only now and then a nestling lingers in some heart
alway.

But the love of childhood strengthened in the heart
of Eloise ;

Much she dreamed of Claude in secret, though she
used no arts to please.

Lives will broaden like the rivers, and in wider chan-
nels pour ;

Swift our childhood glides behind us, like a city on
a shore.

Where the river gleamed and glistened, gliding
'twixt its reedy shores,
And its white lips kissed its margins with a sound
like dripping oars ;

Where the water laughed and gurgled in and out
amid the trees,—

There with lingering feet at sunset wandered Claude
and Eloise.

Brave the man and fair the maiden, strong and true
their young hearts beat ;
Blue the east and red the west was, bright the water
at their feet.

Once he saw her with another wander by the sunlit
tide ;

Cold as *Ænus'* fount then grew he, sought no more
the river side.

Chill grew she, and to his greeting coldly did her
lips respond ;

For the fond heart of a woman is as proud as it is
fond.

Like a coat of mail unyielding, woman's pride her
heart will shield ;
Oh ! a woman's pride will suffer all things, but it
will not yield.

So they lived, and so they parted, while the weary
years rolled on ;
She gave neither sign nor token that the light of life
was gone.

And he deemed her false and fickle, changeful as
the sunset glow,
Shallow-hearted, feeble-passioned, judged all women
must be so.

Men are wise,— to their own thinking,— wise in
reading women's souls ;
But they read them ill, like children blundering o'er
monastic scrolls.

Oft they say, “They are the primers read when life's
hard tasks commence.”
Well, perhaps ; but reading slowly, stumbling much,
they lose the sense.

Silent lived they, neither guessing how the other's
heart would grieve ;
Oh, the crooked paths we tread in ! oh, the tangled
webs we weave !

In the faultless scales of Heaven worlds may be out-
weighed by tears ;
Aye, oftentimes in God's great balance words are
heavier than spheres.

Small acts may decide the measure of our future
woe or bliss ;
Idle words and careless glances have sealed human
destinies.

Human pride and human anger, ye are bitter foes
of ours ;
Ye can blight our joys seraphic, as the north-wind
blights the flowers.

Many a sweetly blooming promise of our early youth
ye kill ;
O my Eloise, in silence do you live and suffer still ?

'T is the tearless eye that burneth, and the quiet
brow that aches ;

'T is the patient soul that suffers, and the silent heart
that breaks.

So to-night I sit and wonder, Did thy heart break,
Eloise ?

Is the pulse of human anguish therein lulled to end-
less peace ?

Sweetly, sadly, Memory whispers like the mournful
autumn gale,

Makes sad music on my heart-strings with this half-
forgotten tale.

Yet it soothes me, like the soft hand of a loving
spirit laid

On the aching soul, and left there till the fever-pain
is stayed.

We can bear the solemn minor of our own lives
better, when

We can hear the same chords sounding in the lives
of other men.

Sorrow is the balm of sorrow ; grief may solace
grief again ;

Sweet is fellowship in pleasure, sweeter fellowship
in pain.

If the dirge of universal sorrow, as it upward rolls,
Keeps our souls reverberating with the dearth of other
souls,

We shall listen less intently to the notes of pain and
strife

In our own ; and gladder, sweeter, then shall ring
our song of life.

MOTHER.

'T IS marvellous, the power of a word,
How it can drive the blood in scorching
waves

Along the veins until the pulses flame,
Or roll it back until the drowning heart
Beats 'gainst the bosom like an iron fist,
Leaving the brow as bloomless and as cold
As drifted snow, and make the eyes dilate
Like earth-drawn meteors. As a full red rose
Breaks through a cobweb on a summer morn,
I 've seen the warm blood yearning from the cheek
At sound of one light word flung from the lips
Like thistle-down upon the idle wind.
I 've known such word to lodge within the breast,
And burn and beat there like a second heart.
A word 's a thing of life born of the soul,
And plumed with wings whose flight shall distance
time.

Behold, a word 's the image of a thought ;
'T is like the thought : and yet who hath not felt,
The thought is often better than the word,
As God is far more excellent than man ?
And yet man is His image, like to Him.
A word 's a shrine wherein a spirit dwells.

O holy image of a holier thought !
O sweet word Mother, shrine wherein abides
The purest thought conceived of human heart !
O word of all words that are not divine !
Thou seemest clothed with half divinity,
With more than earthly power ; for at thy sound,
Or at its echo from the heights of Time,
Like note of shepherd's horn from alpine peaks,
The shining poniard from the victim's heart
Has turned aside into the sheath again ;
A tender smile has lit the sullen face,
Like sunlight bursting through a sombre cloud ;
The iron heart has fused to hissing tears.
Beats there a heart so seared by heats of time,
So dulled by sin, it does not sometimes faint
With mother-hunger in life's wilderness ?
Dumb be the lips and palsied be the tongue

That dare revile a name so sanctified !
World-conquerors have prized a mother's tear
Above the weighty counsels of their peers.

My Mother,— and not mine alone, but ours,—
Thou pilot star upon life's wintry sea,
Smile thou on all our dark, thou golden clasp
Upon the circlet of our vestal love !
I hear thy footfall through the echoing night,
Light as the leaf-fall on the mellow turf ;
As priestess mid the images of saints,
I see thee glide amid thy sleeping babes,
Bearing a lighted taper in thy hand ;
I see thee stroke some forehead flushed with sleep
As blossom with the rosy light of eve,
Or gently bend to kiss away the tear
That shines there like a drop of pearly dew ;
I hear thee whisper soothing words, and sing
The troubled moan into a fairy dream.
Thou bearest thy children through the changing
years,
As wears a rose-tree all its crown of buds :
Oh, it were meet that they at last should bloom,
And bless thee with their beauteous fragrant lives !

Thou teachest us, not all the great of earth
Are great in story, and thou teachest us
That princely spirits of puissance dwell
In fragile tenements ; thou teachest us
To lose and live, to suffer and endure,
To stand on the dark world and touch the clouds,
As lofty mountain planted on the earth
Can feel the throes of her great heart, yet bathe
Its forehead in the rosy light of heaven.
Behold, thy children rise and call thee blest.
Wert thou a glorious hero, I would sing
Thy martial deeds ; and yet Achilles' shield
Lay not upon a braver heart than thine.
Wert thou a Stephen, I would pause and sing
Thy glorious martyrdom ; yet martyred saint
Ne'er suffered with more saintly grace than thou.
The thoughts unuttered are oftentimes the thoughts
Too deep for human speech, as pearls that lie
Too deep in ocean's heart to catch the light.
The songs from which our lips refrain are those
Beyond our mastery ; and so I find
That song and speech have all unworthy proved
Here to embalm thy goodness or our love.

WHERE ART THOU, DARLING?

WHERE art thou, darling? Dost thou lean
Thy forehead from yon silver star,
While in the ether ocean vast
Titanic suns go sweeping past
Like ships with shrouds of fire? Dost ween
How I do stand and weep afar?

Hast thou forgot the mighty love
With which I circled thee below?
Do bright-haired angels, folding thee
With their white pinions tenderly,
Salute thee in thy rest above
With deeper love than I could show?

As round a sun pale planets burn
In bright-revolving clusters, so
Around thy forehead, precious one,

Which was my life, my light, my sun,
All hopes and purposes did turn,
Circle and cluster, change and glow.

Where art thou, darling? I entreat
Of sages, and they answer me :
“ Beyond the purlieus of all Time,
In sempiternal spheres sublime
Which lie at rest about God’s feet,
Somewhere he lives eternally.”

O blind abstraction! Here I reel,
And clutch the air, and strive for breath!
Oh, Somewhere is too near akin
To Nowhere for my soul to win
A gleam of hope which back might feel
Through the black gallery of death!

If these time-weary thoughts of mine,
Beating about God’s universe,
Could find some solitary star,
However lone and faint and far,
To rest on, saying, “ Here are thine ! ”
The edge were taken from the curse.

Then would my burning restless eyes
Fasten upon that blessed star,
And I should whisper, “Thou art there,
My darling, growing very fair !”
And I could fancy thou didst rise
And beckon to me from afar.

And if the rocks of this terrene
Should bruise my hastening feet the while,
Then I could look up through the night
To that one star so calm and white,
And I could fancy thou didst lean
Across its silver edge, and smile.

Ah, Somewhere out there in the night !—
Mad am I, that I know not where !—
Somewhere, Somewhere !—O God, be just !
Remember that I am but dust !
Strengthen mine eyelids for the light
Of Thy great mysteries laid bare !

Forgive me that I cannot grasp
A radiant mist, and hold it still !
The heart is weak ; a thousand hearts

Seem shuddering in these mortal parts ;
Forgive me that I cannot clasp
The heaven-broad blossom of Thy will !

One pointeth earthward when I cry ;
His slow words throb like a death toll ;
He sayeth of my costly pearl,
Around which the white vapors curl
From heavenly shrines, “ There he doth lie,
Thy darling, neighboring with the mole ! ”

Not that ! No, no ! — God ! save me, God,
From that black vortex of despair
Into whose deathful, hellish swirl,
In blinding whirl and counter-whirl,
All hope is sucked in eddies broad !
Oh, rather say, Somewhere, Somewhere !

Where art thou, darling ? Lo ! I hold
My poor face to the dumb gray sky ;
The downy pinions of the snow
Strike soft against it as they go :
Come, darling, on my forehead cold
Lay thy soft finger-tips, and I

Shall be content a little while ;
For though upon my death-numb brow
Thy hand fell lighter than the snow,
My darling, I should surely know
That it were thine, and I could smile,—
A grace I have forgotten now.

Where art thou, darling? Like a bell
Ringing most sweetly down the broad
Abyss which gaps 'twixt Heaven and Time,
I hear thy voice : a sweeter chime
It taketh on, a loftier swell ;
It whispers, “Love, Somewhere with God !”

Oh, sweeter than the tuneful wave
That creeps up singing from the sea,
Sweeter than Hermes' chorded shell,—
Oh, richer than deep organ swell
Through echoing transept, aisle, and nave,—
“Somewhere with God I wait for thee !”

LOVE AND DOUBT.

SWEET Faith, my dawn-star and my nightingale,
I cannot keep from singing ; hear my song !
Thou wilt remember a low-breathing night
We stood within the garden dim and still,
When tulips held their red cups to the stars
To catch the crystal dew-wine cloud-distilled,
When Hyacinthus in his yearly bloom
Breathed forth his sweet soul on the young June air,
And like a silver pendulum the moon
Swung slowly through her ample arc of blue.
I clasped thy hand, and cried, "O Faith, sweet Faith,
No broad skirt-sweep of time, no breadth of space,
No power of man or hell or heaven itself,
Shall drive our souls asunder into time ;
But thou, my dawn-star and my nightingale,
Shalt ever light my soul and sing to it !"
I fastened on thy lips, and lingered there
As bee half-drunk with sweets hangs on a rose ;

Then turned, and glided like a happy dream
Through the dim garden. But I hungered still,
And turned, like Orpheus, to gaze on thee.
Still thou wert standing, with a smile as sweet
As thou hadst given me, — but not for me ;
Another clasped thy hand, bowed over it :
I knew him well ; he was thy early friend.
The moon reeled forward, and the dizzy stars
Seemed plunging headlong from their native spheres.
A tongue of fire leaped in my heart and set
My pulses burning outward through my veins.
Out of a little shadowed circumstance,
A hand-clasp, or a word not understood,
In the white heat of passion oft we forge
A chain of weary doubts and vague distrusts
Which tethers us to an abiding grief.
I stood before thee, white as that cold moon ;
Between my teeth I muttered : “ Make this clear ! ”
With all thy proud soul dawning in thine eyes,
Thou didst reply : “ I scorn to make aught clear !
The love that must be justified by words
Cannot be love at all ; ” and thou wert gone.
I turned, and like a nightmare through the dark
I fled away. My anguished soul cried out :

“ Ye painless stars, drop from your silver brows
Some antidote for grief, some lethean drug
Such as the Argive Helen gave her guests !
Hush this wild pain, O thou soft-bosomed Sleep !
Thou white-armed nurse of sorrow, fold my soul ! ”
Complaining thus, I slept. Then thou didst come,
Plucking my heart out, held it in thy hands.
One shivering cord still bound it to my breast ;
O'er this I felt the palpitating life
Throb inward through my being, and I knew
To break the cord between us meant to die.
Straightway I rose, and like a shadow crept
Into the garden, lying dim and still.
I touched the clustering hearts that bowed themselves
Upon their stems, and down their delicate points
Bled drops of crimson ; I caressed thy rose ;
I kissed the dew dry on thy hyacinths.
A white mist from the river floated up,
And drifted moonward like a phantom ship ;
Across the pearly forehead of the dawn
The new day's life in scarlet pulses beat ;
Through glooms of purple, like the morning star
I saw thy forehead gleaming : then I caught
Thy dew-damp skirts, and cried, “ Forgive, forgive ! ”

Thy answer came : “Forgiven, oh, forgiven !
He was a friend in trouble.”—“Stop !” I cried ;
“No word of thine shall make aught clear to me.
‘The love that must be justified by words
Cannot be love at all :’ so thou hast said ;
But is this love of mine, all passion-stained,
Doubt-frayed about its golden edges, fit
To enter in thy soul, and weave itself
About the white bloom of thy thoughts, sweet Faith ?”
Oh, I remember how thy hands were dropped
Like soft white lilies down upon my own !
A smile burst in full bloom upon thy lip.
Oh, I remember how thy luminous words
Through my soul’s twilight fell like shower of stars !
Thou saidst : “Dear heart, ‘t is strength of love
makes doubt,
As sun in summer solstice gathers clouds ;
And love is always sweeter afterward,
As skies are always clearer after rain.
Who never doubted, never truly loved.”

WHO COMFORTETH THE COMFORTER.

BEHOLD him ! How his great heart glows
 Into his eyes, and overflows
 His eyelids with their fringes brown ;
Just as the sun's heart over-slips
 The lids of night, and freely drips
 In lachrymals of glory down.

You touched his hand : how warm and strong,
As if his great heart lay along
 The ample palm ! He spoke to you :
His words were like the viewless fall
 Of God's dews scattered over all,
 They were so fresh and pure and true.

He smiles or weeps with all who weep
Or smile ; wherever shadows creep,
 His face comes, as God's morning were

Upon it : but of all who drink
His sweet wise words, does any think
Who comforteth the comforter ?

At night he wrestles with his pain
Alone, and looks out through a rain
Of tears to see if through the dim
Angels are breaking like the dawn,
With cool white hands to rest upon
His reeking forehead, soothing him.

Oh, he whose lips breathe constant grace,
Who ever bears upon his face
The silent grand apocalypse
Of God's sweet mercy, must receive
Small part of what he gives, and grieve
Uncomforted in Hope's eclipse.

Uncomforted ? Nay, think not so !
White deeds, dropped thickly, drift like snow,
And lift the soul where it may boast
Of saint-like nearness to Christ's feet,
And angel intimacies sweet :
He knows Christ best who helps men most.

Pure deeds are fruit of love divine,
And bear the soul their own sweet wine
 To make its holiest pulses stir
With angel rapture : men forget
That great hearts suffer greatly ; yet
 God comforteth the comforter.

FAREWELL.

FAREWELL, my friends, forevermore farewell !

I am not thine, nor thine, nor yet my own.
I am to-day a thing most incomplete :

A part of me is left with Yesterday ;
A part approaches from To-morrow's shore.

See yonder where the day's shut eye has left
Its golden lashes fringing down the west :

Before it opens on the world again
I shall have changed, have taken and have given.

The rosy pinioned Hours that beat the air,
And set it singing to the tune of hope,
Each, saucy-lipped, cries, "Thou art mine, art
mine ! "

The fair fleet-footed days that follow on,
Into my soul their delicate fingers thrust ;
Each takes a portion, and a portion leaves.
I hear the tread of the majestic years

Loud ring along the echoing track of Time ;
Each something takes in passing, something leaves.
The false of yesterday, to-day is truth ;
The truths of yesterday, to-day are false.
The vision bright, white-bosomed, crimson-lipped,
That yester-morning whispered, " I am Love ! "
To-day, a withered crone, shrieks, " I am Hate ! "
Friendships, most sweet at yester-eve, have grown
Wide-mouthed Medusas, snaky-ringleted.
That which to-day I call most good and sweet,
Shall gall and wormwood prove to-morrow morn.
Farewell, my friends ! hold fast that which ye have !
Ye shall not see me more, but part of me.
Of thee I take, and of myself I leave.
Sun-systems, worlds, rocks, thrones, and souls, all
seem
In vortices of dissolution whirled.
Perhaps, when through the limbec of the years
My being shall have filtered out of Time,
It will have grown so subtly fine and pure,
No grosser thing can cleave to it or take
Of its ethereal substance any part.
The silver plough of Night breaks up the dark
In shining furrows, and an unseen hand

Sows seeds of light along the field of heaven.
Farewell ! I go while yet I seem unchanged ;
One thing alone I hold as mine to keep, —
My faith in God, as fixed, unchangeable,
Creation's rock, firm-based, infrangible.

SYMPATHY.

THE white-toothed sea gnaws at the grizzly rocks,
And moans along the shore like one in pain ;
High on the glistening sands its hoary locks
In strands of foam fall o'er and o'er again.

The purple-footed eve across the wave
Comes like a maiden to her lover's tomb ;
Her hands are full of stars to deck the grave
Of the dead day, deep-sepulchred in gloom.

The moon is cold and white as some dead face ;
About the stars a gray mist seems to cling ;
The sea-gull circles low with weary grace ;
The wind grieves shoreward like a hunted thing.

But yester-eve, the sky and sea were bright :
In earth's one round the universe has changed ;
The moon and stars have parted from their light
Because one friend to me has been estranged.

'T is sympathy of heart to heart inclined,—
The cord that 'twixt two spirits may abide,
O'er which thought flashes thought from mind to
mind,
That robes the earth in beauty like a bride,—

Sweet sympathy, that soothes earth's saddest wail,
Wakes deeper rapture when the linnet trills,
Sings in the soul's dark like a nightingale,
Runs through life's web of care in magic thrills ;

Makes stars burn deeper through night's shadowy
flow,
Imparts a richer bloom to flowers and fruits,
And, failing, makes the bright sun smoulder low,
And stars seem withered to their golden roots.

Love lights Earth down the ages to her goal,
And sympathy is love's most glorious part,—
O human sympathy, balm of the soul,
And precious ointment to the bruisèd heart !

ON THE BIRTHDAY OF A FRIEND.

EARTH'S millions dream upon the breast of Night,
And not a living creature seems to start,
Though all the eyes of heaven are filled with light,
While ponderous thoughts do hold my lids apart.

The Northern Light streams like a burning tress
Shorn from the brow of some resplendent god ;
The hand of Night, in beautiful excess,
As grains of wheat has sown the stars abroad.

O thou, the goblet of whose life contains,
Even with mine, its one-and-twenty years,
Who waitest the slow result of Time to rain
The fragile chalice full of smiles and tears, —

Above the gaping distance let us bend
Our spirits, as the heaven's blue arch the sea,
Until the currents of our thoughts shall blend
And rush on in one torrent strong and free !

O blissful age, with budding promise set
Thick in hope's verdure, springing green and lush,
With dewy sweetness of desire still wet,
Rose-tinted with ambition's kindling flush !

The round earth seems to spin beneath our feet,
To bend and smile the hollow blue above,
The streams unto the peaceful vales to bleat,
The vales to sing unto the hills of love.

The harp of Thought within the hands of Time
Is quivering through all its thousand strings,
Beneath the magic touch of souls sublime,
As harp æolian fanned by seraph wings.

The air around us thrills and palpitates
With living strains which Homer's dead have sung ;
Beyond the Future's ever close-shut gates
The golden bells of promise long have rung, —

Promise that Science, with her swift-winged feet
Striding from orb to orb with zeal o'erfraught,
Shall come at last to Truth's most deep retreat,
And lead her forth in the full light of Thought ;

That Truth shall fearless war with Falsehood wage,
 Her silver tongue drop ringing words that tell,
Strike deep and sweet on the responsive age,
 Like hammer struck on deep-resounding bell ;

Promise that Justice's iron hand shall reach
 Out of the clouds, and feel from soul to soul,
Correct man's judgment as a watch, and teach
 The passions to submit, mind to control ;

That Love, with fair encircling arms, embrace
 All Adam's sons, east, west, and north, and south,
Upon her milk-white breast, and bend to place
 Her tender palm upon the cannon's mouth ;

Promise that Art shall come at last to sit
 Enthroned at Nature's bountiful right hand,
So pure and beautiful all shall admit
 That next to Nature Art should peerless stand.

We follow Science, and we pant for Truth ;
 We long to see the hand of Justice reign ;
We cling unto Art's ample skirts, forsooth,
 And cry as babes the mother's eye to gain.

We long to wake the Muses from their trance,
And hear the ringing epic tell of worth,
From souls that burn and lips that breathe, per-
chance,
Not from dead Homers of uncertain birth.

Our souls with pure desires have grown replete,—

Desire to strengthen human love and trust,
To press unto our lips Truth's bugle sweet,
And lay some wall of Error low in dust ;

To lift again the lowly-fallen lyre
Of finite bliss which mortals still yearn toward,
And, striking it with strong and pure desire,
Bring all its false strings into sweet accord ;

To nurture every bud of purpose true

Put forth among the leaves of human thought,
To feed it with love's subtilizing dew,
Till to the blooming rose of action brought.

Oh, is it thus that other souls have yearned

With large desire unto their kindred race ?
Oh, is it thus that other hearts have burned
To clothe existence with surpassing grace ?

Oh, is it thus that other lives have leapt
To ardent flame beneath the breath of Time,
But to resolve to frail white dust far swept
By idle winds that roam from clime to clime?

O sweet Ionian vales! speak unto us
And tell us, do thy dew-anointed flowers
Shoot slender roots through breasts that panted thus,
Through heart-dust made from hearts that beat
like ours?

O Ida, on whose breast the fountain feeds,
Within thy sight how many God-like men
Have thought great thoughts, enacted valiant deeds,
Hoped, doubted, struggled, and were dust again?

Has oft the cold moon, sitting on thy brow,
Seen giant spirits struggling in the night,
Souls wrestling and brows aching then as now,
Through fleshy darkness feeling for the light?

O fallen Greece! thou shattered jewel set
In fair encircling seas like jasper-stones,
The ghost of ancient glory whispers yet
Amid thy broken columns, and its tones

Are all prophetic of the cyclic course
 Of human history upon the face
Of Time's unfathomed deep, and its discourse
 Breathes vaguely of a mighty unborn race.

On some sublime Parnassus we shall wait,
 Where vanished Muses once again shall reign,
And epic poets yet shall crown our state,
 While living minstrels breathe the lyric strain.

As grows a faint light in the eastern sky,
 The coming of the bright orb to presage,
So modern Art, upclimbing bright and high,
 Shall orb itself into a golden age.

What if our lives but burn as finite sparks,
 And in the universal flame be blent
That flashes through Creation's deepest darks,
 If they the general light and heat augment !

As yon pale star on heaven's eastern curve
 Surveys the golden ranks of marching spheres,
Views calmly each majestic dip and swerve
 Of giant suns among their blazing peers, —

So we on life's low rim the light have caught
From giant spirits in their courses bright
Throughout the boundless universe of thought,
And rest content to show a little light.

Above the gaping distance let us bend
Our spirits, as the heaven's blue arch the sea,
Until the currents of our love shall blend
And rush on in one torrent strong and free !

Thou knowest that each feebly-spoken word
Is but a rude sketch of the inner thought,
And how the spirit, like a new-caged bird,
Pines for life's wildwood with true action fraught.

I know how, 'neath thy spirit's outspread wings,
Life's pure air ever beats against thy heart ;
And, as the wild-bird in the thicket sings,
Thou singest sweetly wheresoe'er thou art.

Thou singest day by day, although thy voice
Should quaver now and then with inward pain ;
And all who hear thy happy notes rejoice,
As all the wood to hear the linnet's strain.

My friend ! no higher title sceptred king
Upon his dearest subject could bestow ;
Within my soul thy memory doth sing :
Mine lives unchanged within thy soul, I know.

I count it ample proof of human worth
To be the faithful friend of one true heart ;
I hold there is no sweeter thing on earth
Than in pure friendship to have equal part, —

A friendship bright and constant as the stars,
That changes not with change of time or state ;
No cloud of doubt its steady lustre bars,
Through all the cyclic years inviolate.

If men will name the virtues of the dead
When life's frail thread is spun out to its end,
First of my virtues I would have it said
That I was reckoned as a faithful friend.

No scoffing tongue shall ever say that Time
Laid icy hands upon our early love,
Or yawning distance made it less sublime ;
Such friendship years but strengthen while they
prove.

Still living, bright, are those transcendent days
When, arm-in-arm, we held sweet intercourse ;
And not a whole world's weighty blame or praise
Can dim their lustre or abate their force.

Twice has the autumn wept its yellow leaves
In sadness on the earth's maternal breast ;
The frozen dews of two bright Christmas Eves
Have fallen, since thy loving hand I pressed.

This New Year's Eve I sit and wait alone
The dying of the Old Year from the earth,
When Time shall bear him from his crystal throne,
While silver chimes proclaim the new king's birth.

The trees, like white-robed maidens, toss their arms
Unto the sky, its bosom all aglow
With stars set thick upon its azure charms,
While stars flash back from earth's white veil below.

A light cloud hides, on yon cerulean wall,
Night's brightest orb ; I miss it from its place,
As when you miss the dearest friend of all,
Though countless other friends smile on your face.

Though pendulous orbs of light, a shining crowd,
 Swing through unmeasured arcs of light afar,
I smile when from yon fleecy island cloud
 Into the still blue sails that white-browed star ;

As when a great thought, leaping in the brain,
 All on a sudden makes the pulses thrill,—
A thought we have been searching long in vain,
 Bursts star-like on us without act or will.

And now floats up the full fair-breasted moon
 Along the sky, majestically, slow,
As when a graceful swan, at breathless noon,
 Drifts o'er the azure lake, with breast of snow.

A thousand worlds above, one world below,
 Flash on the night a wondrous light and calm ;
Earth, mantled in her priestly robe of snow,
 Seems breathing forth a mighty wordless psalm.

A glory indeterminate doth gleam
 Around her, as a smile lights all the face ;
And lo ! as one that hath a pleasant dream,
 She softly sighs about my watching place.

Ah ! hark, the bells ! the year, the year is dead !
A strand of life knit up ! Old Year, good-by !
In Time's dark catacombs go make thy bed,
With a long train of noble peers to lie !

Come in, New Year, with all thy youthful grace ;
The light breeze fans thee with its frost-plumed
wing ;
The new day holds thee in its strong embrace :
So fair a nurse ne'er fondled infant king.

Bring to these hearts a thousand high resolves ;
Bring love to sweeten all earth's wrong and ruth ;
Bring faith in faith, as sphere in sphere revolves ;
Bring in the bounteous harvest-time of Truth !

Bring us the light of free unbiased thought ;
Breathe souls of action into lifeless creeds ;
With blessed wisdom let thy wings be fraught ;
Oh, bring a swollen tide of saintly deeds !

Ring thou the knell of prejudice and pride ;
Ring thou the marriage-bell of rank and worth ;
Throughout thy reign let Might in Right abide ;
Tread down false social systems unto earth !

As Summer cloud brings famished earth the rain,
And Spring the song-bird to the silent nook,
Bring thou my cherished friend to me again ;
I pant for her, as hart for water-brook !

Thou camest, my friend, into the world with song ;
The glad bells called to echoes far away ;
The changing seasons of thy life along
Have kept the music of thy natal day.

A thousand lights,— love, thought, with action
blent,—
Shall meet at last in one existence bright,
As when a thousand sunbeams fall aslant
The world, and meet in one broad ray of light.

Large heart, large mind, in thee hold equal part,
And neither cramped for having half the reign ;
Not less than man because thou hast a heart,
Not less a woman that thou hast a brain !

My song is ended ; silent is my lute.
The new day enters, and mine eye beholds
The Old Year rounded to its perfect fruit,
And fallen ; and another bud unfolds.

A VISION OF LOVE.

I.

SO ye will have my love-tale in a song !
Why, I might give it in one liquid word,
As from the leafy dark a simple bird
By one clear note repeated oft and long
Pours out the life-thrills in him, sweet and strong.
Yet know ye that the soul's deep seas are stirred
By one white leap of lightning truth, unheard,
Unseen without, but felt the soul along.
When I have done, your lids shall starward turn ;
Ye 'll say : " We feel some throbs of love pure-toned,
Cravings for some new life to beat and burn
Through all our veins of being ; we have owned
An ideal love to which the soul must yearn,
Thus keeping something God-like undethroned."

II.

Beneath the evening star, through eve's deep still,
He came, with brows such as the fancy weaves

With myrtle spray to which the white dew cleaves ;
His voice flowed as the music of a rill,
Rustled through all my pulses with a thrill
As comes a fresh wind, shaking all the leaves,
When from the thicket upon stilly eves
A wild bird tunes his mate a good-night trill.
In those calm eyes, bent star-like on my face,
In all the matchless thews of limb and brain,
The true mouth's curves of sweetness, and the grace
Of words inimitable which fell like rain
From off its crimson edges, I could trace
My soul's one answering soul through bliss and pain.

III.

Out on the current of a holy theme
Our two souls drifted in the barge of speech,
Learning the beauties either life could teach ;
Truth, with her white oars, steered us down the
stream.
Each in the other caught the kindred gleam
Of something heavenly, star-bright in each,—
A yearning for the glories out of reach,
A wrestling toward things real through things that
seem.

Thought ripened to such strength that words seemed
weak ;

I felt my blood its parent fountain spurn,
The heart-leaps and the flush upon the cheek
Which come when two souls on a sudden learn
By flash of word which one may chance to speak
That kindred aspirations in them burn.

IV.

What power can part souls wedded thus, which
seek

The same white glistering star in life's gray skies?
I thought, and felt in my soul's longing eyes
His pure glance, masterful, yet angel meek,
Tempting the blood i' th' veins to 'scape the cheek.
Thick shining words he spake then, dewed with
sighs,

Like flowers when from the east the young Dawn
hies,

And breathes upon them ; what is 't thou dost
speak ?

“ Thyself created me, O loving heart,
And crowned me with divine mortality ;

Earth holds me not, nor yet my counterpart ;
I have no being, dear heart, but in thee,
Where I was shaped by Love's immortal art ;
Love only claimeth white souls blemish-free."

v.

Beneath the evening star, through eve's deep hush,
He passed into the purple deeps again,
As slips a rare dream from the waking brain,
Leaving upon my brow a dying flush,
But on my slow-revolving days a blush
Of perfect beauty that shall never wane
Beneath the cold hand of unceasing pain,
Though slow senility life's bloom should crush.
For I have felt the beauty and the balm
Of love that 's heart to heart and mind to mind ;
A joy beyond the touch of palm to palm ;
A deeper, holier rapture than ye find
In clasp and kiss ; a love so deep and calm
It may not be by sensual souls divined.

THE DEAD HERO.

I.

THROUGH all the land a solemn whisper thrills ;
The startled breath upon the warm lip lies ;
And all the bells with trembling tongues arise
To iterate the news through vales and hills ;
Adown the Nation's cheek tears flow in rills ;
The faces of the years look from the skies
With the dead hero's glory in their eyes,
While Freedom's crimson down their white breasts
spills.

Oh, high between the flaming cherubim
Of Truth and Freedom we will set his name ;
Our children will not let its lustre dim,
And Time will guard it with a sword of flame ;
No cloud of cold contum'lious words shall swim
Across this central sun 'mid suns of fame.

II.

Lo, with a sea of sounding words we flood
The name that is a tinkling cymbal now ;
With love's sweet tears we bathe the frozen brow ;
We cover all unworthiness with blood.
We see him only as he grandly stood,
His life flung at his country's feet, and how,
Like century-moulded oak that cannot bow
'Neath common storms, or yield its leaf and bud
To common frosts, he met the fire and steel
As if they were but sunbeams 'round his face,
And dared not pierce a heart so strong and leal.
Peace, sainted hero, in thy resting-place !
And by the heart that loved its country's weal,
We swear to guard thy memory's stainless grace.

III.

I scarce dare mould in words the traitorous thought :
But is this glorious, this immortal dead,
The mortal man of whom so late men said
Such keen-whet words with subtle meaning fraught,
And, looking at him sidewise, daily sought

To have new light upon his frailties shed ?
Does death fall like a glory on the head,
Brightening life's bright, and purging every blot ?
If this be true, oh, it were sweet to die,
And know that men's untarnished love and praise
Will on my memory like a white star lie,
Whose beams shall be a crown to my dead days ;
That 'round my soul's shut gates will float the sigh :
“ Peace, sainted spirit ; good were all thy ways ! ”

THE SNOW.

BETWEEN thy frozen eyelids, in swift grace,
Touched with the form and splendor of the
spheres,
As white as angel's thoughts, thy gelid tears,
O mourning Nature, down thy bosom trace
Their way, and fold thee in a white embrace.
Oh, soft as footsteps of retreating years
That vibrate only in the soul's quick ears !
Oh, pure as kisses on an infant's face !
Thus may my days fall — white, and pure, and still —
Upon the World's cold forehead, lending so
More grace to her bleak brows which throb and thrill
With inward fevers ; noiseless as the snow,
Oh, white and noiseless, may they drift, and fold
Dark spaces of the earth with grace untold !

THE SUN.

O THOU all-searching lidless eye that rolls
In heaven's cyclopean forehead, fierce and
slow,
Thou fiery heart of Time, swung to and fro
In heaven's broad breast, each throb thou givest
doles
A day of earthly life to human souls !
Out of thy heart what living issues flow !
Sealed in thy beams what mighty fiats go
To quicken Nature to her mystic goals !
O thought of God flashed into Night's dark brain ;
O soul of Nature ! is there anything
So clothed with majesty in her domain ?
Aye, mine own soul with mightier wondering
Doth fill my being, more light doth contain,
More fearful, wonderful, than thee I sing.

A STAR.

O WHITE star beating in the hand of God !
Like some great human heart that heaves
and glows,
All un beholden are thy starry throes
Amid the interstellar spaces broad,
Except by him whose holy feet have trod
The nadir glooms : each mighty storm that blows
Across thy fiery brain, but overflows
Thy cheeks in calm white splendor to earth's sod.
Oh, could my soul thus hide in God's wide palm,
And keep its fiery tempests for His eyes,
Showing the world a face as bright and calm
As thine, fair orb, secreting in the skies
Thine awful star-throbs ! Could I let the light
Which comes by pain, not pain, flash through the
night !

THE LEGEND OF LAKE MINNEWAUKON.

CLOSE to the bare bold forehead of the cliff
We stood, and gazed into the lake's white
breast.
Its pulse was still ; its heart was full of stars.
Grim, round, like Nature's nuns, the mountains stood,
Lifting their tree-crowned foreheads to the moon.
We heard the husky voices of the pines
And cedars holding converse with the night.
It was the time when Nature's cheek was red
With that deep hectic, prophet of decay ;
And there were ghostly footfalls on the turf.
My friend, his elbow resting on a rock,
His head supported by his open palm,
Watched the majestic minuet of stars,
And told me the traditions of the lake,—
Lake Minnewaukon, which the people say
Means "Evil Spirit of the Waters." Why,
I queried of my friend, so weird a name

For such a passionless meek lake as this?
An Indian legend? Yes, a foolish tale
About the young loves of a savage maid.
Let's have the tale! Are we not thistle-down
Blown from the same stalk with this savage tribe?
What force of muscle or of heart or brain
Have we that did not dwell somewhere in them,
Though as the pansy slumbers in the seed?
The human heart, though changeful, changes not:
It is to-day the same warm passionate thing
That beat in time with God's own, on that first
Still glorious Sabbath. We behold it thus,
Refracted through six thousand years of time.
Can you not look into the savage heart,
And see the lines of light from your own self
Gathered into an image of yourself,
As yon moon leans her cheek above the lake,
And sees herself repeated, no less fair?
When Time's long fingers, reaching through himself
Backward unto our darker day, shall feel
About our hearts, and measure the extremes
Of heat and cold, the altitudes of love,
The lengths and breadths of passionate desire,
Men shall declare that we were like to them,

Save as the broad sun of experience,
By climbing higher in the arch of life,
Has brought out points of beauty and of truth
Which were by us foredreamed but not foreknown.
One great heart which is God's, to which our own
Are as the dew-drops to the great round sea,
But by love's cordon all divinely marked
As parts of one great whole. We are all brutes,
With something of the angel with us blent,—
All angels, mixed with somewhat of the brute.
He is most brute who loveth least, and he
Most God-like who loves most ; for God is love.
Let's have the legend, while yon golden stars
Glitter like fragments of a shattered sun.
Here is the tale much as he told it me :
See yonder cliff uprear its naked breast
Straight from the water toward the tender moon !
There, says the legend, stood a stern old chief,
And spoke the arrowy words which smote his
child,—
Monona, graceful as the leaping fawn,
Monona, timorous as the forest bird,
Monona, lovely as the evening star.
She stood there, lost in her long shadowy locks ;

And there, too, stood her lovers. One was white,—
A stranger who had chanced into the tribe.
The other was a stalwart Indian brave,
Who stood as straight and strong as the tall pine
'Gainst which he leaned, while through the dark his
eyes
Glittered like some fierce panther's. Spoke the
maid,
And lightly dropped her words as sunset dew,
And with a sound as sweet as laughing streams
Which skip amid the rocks in rainbow glee :
“ My father, let Monona have her way,
And for a husband choose what one she will ;
Or else her heart will burn, and burn, and burn,
Until it burns to ashes in her breast.
I love him best who hath the luminous face :
He came upon me like the morning sun,
And drew me to him like the morning mist.
Mine eyes have followed him across the lake,
And seen him leap like light amid the crags,
Till in me burns my heart as 't were a star
Slipped out of heaven and lodged within my breast.
My father, let Monona have her way,
Or she will die.” Then spoke the grizzled chief,

With summer lightning leaping in his eyes,
With summer thunder rumbling in his voice,
But with the frost of winter in his heart :
“ Ye two have wooed the maiden long enough,
And wrangled over her, and broke the peace
Of all the tribe ; yon calm high-treading moon,
With the pale brow, this night shall see an end.
On yonder cliff there is an eagle’s nest ;
And he who first shall reach it and bring down
An eaglet, and present it to the maid,
Shall have her for his own.” The while he spoke,
About his gray mouth skulked a cunning smile ;
For inly he had reasoned : “ Without doubt
The red man will be swifter on his feet.”
As from the shivering cord the arrow leaps,
Eager to reach its goal, so through the dark
Each lover darted. Fixed the maiden stood,
With brow leaned forward, till the last faint sound
Of rustling footsteps swooned upon the air ;
Then, like a moonbeam slipping through the rocks,
She glided downward to the sandy beach,
Loosed from its fastenings her birch canoe,
And like a moonbeam slipped across the lake
Here at the foot of this steep cliff she paused,

And dumbly waited. How they leaped and climbed !
Now one and now the other gained a pace.
Love maketh wings for feet and nerves for hands,
And he who loves most truly is most strong.
The pale-browed stranger gained the eagle's nest,
And waved his fluttering prize above the cliff.
Across the red man's lips a cry of rage
Broke when he saw the triumph of his foe.
He twined his lusty arms about the waist
Of his pale rival, hurled him headlong down,
To break his life upon the merciless rocks,
And stain the still, white water with his blood.
Then from the eagle's nest the Indian seized
A second eaglet like unto the first,
And carried it in triumph toward the maid.
But she raised not her eyelids, breathed no word.
Flinging her black locks backward to the night,
She stretched her bare arms toward the tremulous
 moon
Which swam beneath the waves ; without a sigh,
She leaped into the lake, and sank from sight.
The legend does not say what cry arose,
Of tender sorrow or of vain remorse,
From that hard father, when the word was brought,

Or how the Indian brave wailed his lost love ;
But there was not a sigh save heaven's breath,
And not a tear save the cold tears of night,
When through the pearly fingers of the dawn
The first red sunbeam slipped adown the world.
Now, when sad Nature's forehead flushes flame,
Ere in her gelid veins the warm life sleeps,
When everywhere in her domain is seen
The garish mocking pageantry of death,
With the white moon, in dewy deeps of night,
The spirit of the Indian maiden steals
Out of the lake, and lonely seeks the shore.
She wanders wearily amid the rocks,
And tosses her dark arms, and weeps and sighs,
Till all the night is voiceful and astir,
And all the lake is restless and afoam.
This is the legend which the people tell.
Even in those days, when man's hand was pure
From fondling oft a hoard of darling gold,
Before his heart grew timid, and his sense
Drunk with the blood of poppies and of grapes,
He could not hold from breaking Nature's laws,
If thereby he might gain a single point.
Time may stride on down his pre-measured track,

Our little planet gambol 'round the sun,
But human nature will be human still,
As it was in the orient of time,
Until the godhood in it reaches bloom,
By that divine antholysis of soul,
That awful mystery of Life called Death.

NOTHING NEW.

NOW rock me gently, Mother Earth,
That I may sleep with this dead year
On whom drops many a frozen tear
From Night's cold cheek. Of little worth

I count the year that is to be ;
I 'm weary of the constant moon
Whose path with flakes of fire is strewn,
Her deathless passion for the sea.

No new tides thunder at their bars ;
There is no quickening in the sun ;
Men scan the track which he must run,
And count the footsteps of the stars.

With iron laws they chain all things
From sea to sun, from earth to star ;
They hear the whirlwind pant afar,
And point the circuit of its wings.

Oh, rock me forward toward the dawn !
She cometh, blushing faint and far,—
Within her forehead a white star,
The glad young year her breast upon.

But wake me not. What profits it
To grind one's soul against Life's wheel,
To pant and strain, and still to feel
There 's wrought no lasting benefit ?

All that my fervent soul to-day
Unto the shrine of beauty brings
Is but an echo of past things,
And echo-like shall die away.

What has been, is ; what is, shall be.
O cyclic track on which we run !
I 'm dizzy, circling round the sun
'Twixt eve and dawning ceaselessly.

Then rock me gently ; let me rest !
I would not see this babe of Time
With prophet brows and eyes sublime ;
The Old Year's heart beats in its breast.

A hand has pushed us toward the sun ;
The infant year doth stretch his arms,
And woo me with his rosy charms :
What spell is on me ? I am won !

Mysterious passion that doth thrill
'Twixt time and mortals ! though we try
To shun the wizard in his eye,
We cleave to him against our will.

MY SOUL.

INTO the shadow of the throne of God,
My infant soul, thou darest creep, and hold
Thy weakling palms out, out, to touch a fold
Of his sun-broidered toga, floating broad.
Thou smilest at the far gleam of white wings,
Like last night's dream, such faint and filmy
things,
At crystal heights by glimmering feet down-trod.

Thou laughest, infant soul, in mad delight
When, faint and sweet, vibrating to thine ears,
Sliding adown the gamut of the spheres,
A silver note comes singing through the night,
Astray from tune-drenched cithern angel-swept,
As from an angel heart a pulse had leapt,
Vibrant with music down some heavenly height.

Thou tremblest in me, O my infant soul,
Feeling the organ-thunder of the spheres,
Time's stern heart beating off the rhythmic years,
The harmonies that sweep and swell and roll
Through avenues of sense up to the brain ;
The glories so intense they break with pain
On angel eyes and brow and aureole.

Oh, how thou prattlest of God's truth and God,
As infant of far organ swells and swounds !
Oh, how thou babblest of celestial sounds,
Of God's right arm, as of a lictor's rod !
How strainest for high things through sentient
bars,
As cooing babes reach toward the influent stars,
As for bright lilies set in waves, blue, broad !

How shalt thou grow more virile, keeping white
Thy forehead from deep blushes born of shame
That creep from throat up in a scarlet flame
To tresses' marge ? How comprehend the light,
The high harmonics that do sweep and change
Throughout creation's vibratory range,
From star-white rim to rim, world depth, sun height ?

Thou shalt grow strong but through thy daily drill
In pain of soul and anguishing of breath ;
Leashed unto sorrow, fraternized with death,
Thou shalt with such force throttle thine own will
As shakes the thoughts of angels to their deeps,
And lifts thee up on Sorrow's blessed steeps,
Where drop the dews of God's truth, pure and still.

Aye, thou must feel Sin's crimson-bladed knife ;
Learn love and suffering are of twin birth ;
Must feel hell thunder 'neath the rocking earth ;
The awful silences that come in life,
As if God's mighty heart had ceased to beat,
And all the universe, hushed at his feet,
Lay breathless, waiting for his pulses' strife ;

Must lie face down, and learn how small thou art ;
Lo ! all the fiery brains that light the world
Burn but through knowing what truths still lie furled,
Through knowing what they know not. Learn thy
part,
Thy thoughts' puerility, thy days' small length ;
To know thy weakness,—therein lies thy strength ;
To know thy foolishness makes wise thy heart.

Though I should lie in some black well of shame,
And listen to the sunward-soaring lark
Dropping his dew-pure notes into my dark ;
O'er my soul's forehead though the martyr flame
Creep hotly like a white and angry hand,
With soundless touch that leaves a deathless
brand,—
Still shall my shrinking spirit cry the same :

Purge me, O God, until I seem Christ-pure ;
Smite me, till from my soul truth leaps like fire ;
Hew me with the bright blade of thy desire,
Till fair as polished marbles that endure ;
Strike, though the scarlet drops ooze and drip down ;
Chisel my forehead till it fit a crown
Of civic honor in Truth's state secure.

So shall I stand midway 'twixt earth and heaven,
One hand upon the equal pulse of Time,
Feeling the human heart in throes sublime
Of rapture, or by grief and passion riven ;
The other hand in God's dear bosom thrust,
Whose broad palm curves about all human dust ;
Thus make a circuit between earth and heaven.

The human will hard straining from God's will,
The music of tears as they drop and flow,
The sweets of pain,— all these may come, and so
Linked unto heavenly sweetness, through me thrill
In blessed harmony ; so shall I be
A conduit pure of heavenly verity,
And much seem good which hath before seemed ill.

LET HIM SLEEP.

O H, do not wake the little one,
With that long curl across his face,
Like strands of light dropped from the sun,
And twisted there in golden grace !
Oh, tell him not the moments run
Through life's frail fingers in swift chase !
Let him sleep, let him sleep !

Cometh a day when light is pain,
When he will lean his head away,
And sunward hold his palm, to gain
A respite from the glare of day ;
For no fond lip will smile, and say,
“ Let him sleep, let him sleep ! ”

Oh, hush ! oh, hush ! wake not the child !
Just now a light shone from within,
And through his lips an angel smiled,

Too late from heaven for grief to win ;
Oh, children are God's undefiled,
Too late from heaven to dream of sin !
Let him sleep, let him sleep !

WORSE THAN DEAD.

I CANNOT shut my eyes for tears ;
I cannot see yon high hill loom
Its purple forehead through the gloom ;
I see naught but the blood-stained years.

Dead, — he for whom my heart has bled
Its warm life on the years' bright sheaves
As poppy stains its folded leaves ?
Not dead, not dead, but worse than dead !

Dead to all sense of truth and right, —
Him I deemed worthiest of all,
Too wise to stray, too strong to fall :
Dead, dead, yet never out of sight !

I deem it sweeter far to kneel
Beside the grave of one beloved,
And softly say, “ How true he proved ! ”
Than to inclose his palm, and feel

The heart that warms it is unjust,
Has proved unworthy your heart's best,
False to the high faith it professed,
With perfidy has answered trust.

Like silver drip of dropping eves
In pauses of the summer rain,
Amid the hushes of my pain,
His old sweet words fall ; and it grieves

My soul to hear them, — which but proves
The memory of loving ways
Makes cruel ones in after days,
More bitter to the heart that loves.

The cold world must not be aware ;
I 'll cover with a glare of words,
Like gorgeous plumes on songless birds,
My dead trust, that it still seem fair.

I see upon the dim blue marge
Of yon wide waveless sea o'erhead,
Where all the wandering winds are dead,
A white star like a silver barge.

Shine softly, star, upon my bed !
Perhaps some soul in thy white heart
Murmurs to-night, while hot tears start :
“ Not dead, not dead, but worse than dead ! ”

It may be that deceit and shame
Are not chained to our little world,
That in yon starry depths unfurled
They touch white foreheads into flame.

Come, O my soul ! We 'll turn our face
From this dark grief with tresses wild ;
For she is but a gipsy child
That hath no constant biding-place.

Farewell, dead friend ! The cold word 's said ;
Still I behold thee through my tears ;
I feel the eyes of other years
Upon my soul,—worse, worse than dead !

MY ANGEL AND I.

A N angel was born in the soul of my soul ;
His forehead shone like a lucent gem
In its setting of golden hair ;
I felt his angelic pulses roll ;
Like the floor of the new Jerusalem,
His bosom was white and fair.

I said, “ My angel, my youth’s ideal,
I will hold to you, though men call you unreal ! ”

The world said, “ Let go ! ”
But I answered, “ No ! ”

My life, when cast on his glistening breast,
Broke into rainbow hues, whose glow
Was marvellous to behold,—
Like a sunbeam drawn from its golden rest,
And dashed on a prism, and shattered so
Into violet, red, and gold.

Men said, "A dream, a fantasy wild,
Has ravished his soul and his reason beguiled."

The world said, "Let go!"
But I answered, "No!"

We slipped — my angel and I — and fell;
The star-beams blazed from his jostled crown;
Down, down, — O Heaven, how low
We slipped together in that dark well!
The world, passing by, looked solemnly down
With its wise "I told you so!"

My angel's robe looked draggled and torn;
But I clung to him, spite of human scorn.

The world said, "Let go!"
But I answered, "No!"

A jar, a crash! Did a thunderbolt fall
From the throne of God with a lightning pace,
And strike the Earth to her heart?
My angel reeled from his castle wall,
And fold over fold clouds muffled his face,
Forcing us wide apart.

I clung to his white robe with a grip
Too strong with the strength of despair to slip.

The world said, "Let go!"
But I answered, "No!"

We swept through strange darks together so ;
Clouds big with thunder about us crashed,
And the lightning shook its wings ;
Through all the blackness and lurid glow
God's face — though I did not know it — flashed,
And his hand kept the balance of things.

My angel, my angel, I clung to you then,
Despite the pitiless gibes of men.

The world said, "Let go!"
But I answered, "No!"

Like the birth of a star from God's word in the
night,
The Earth flashed out of the storm, all clad
In the fresh robes of His love ;
We stood together on the height, —

My angel and I,—serene and glad,
With the hush of stars above.

The world looked up with sapient eyes,
And said, “I thought so ; you were wise !”

World, shall I let go ?
But the world cried, “No !”

THE END.

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